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THE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

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The School of Education

It seems fitting, in this closing number of the seventh year of this *Journal,* to record something of the present organization, scope, and aim of the school of which it is an organ. The School of Education is soon to enter on its eighth year of activity as a professional school of the University of Chicago. Its function, the training of teachers for all grades and departments of work, has necessitated a complex organization in which many problems have confronted its organizers, some of them unique in the history of the training of teachers. That they will not long remain unique is to be presumed, as other "schools of education" are springing up in other universities. To those who are as yet unfamiliar with this kind of situation some description of this organization, and of these questions, may be of interest.

Some of these problems are: First, the relation of the School of Education to the University of Chicago as a whole; second, the relation of the College of Education to the Elementary and High Schools; third, the organization of a curriculum for the Elementary and High Schools that shall be without gaps and breaks from the Kindergarten through the High School; fourth, the organization of a socialized course of study for these schools in which practical and formal control, individual purpose and social relation, initiative, and habituation, shall be kept in true proportions; fifth, the keeping of a true relation between the fine arts and the handicrafts, the humanities and the sciences.

To make the first question more clear, it may be explained that the School of Education is made up of three integral divisions, the College of Education, the University High School, and the University Elementary School.

While distinct in organization, the College of Education is parallel in most respects to the Colleges of Arts, Literature, and Science. Its courses are to a certain extent interchangeable with these, on the system of credited electives. It differs greatly in this respect, that its Junior and Senior years are distinctly professional in character. It therefore is in one sense an undergraduate college, and in another a professional school, as are the schools of law and medicine. The graduate work in education is given or controlled by the Department of Philosophy and Education. With this brief statement it may easily be surmised that the problems of adjustment are not simple and that the possibilities have been realized far enough to make the future one of great interest and promise.

Of all the problems catalogued above, those relating to the organization and course of study of the Elementary and High Schools contain the kernel of the present educational situation at large. These are the laboratories for the students of the College of Education, and here then lies also the vital and essential heart of our whole institution.

When the School of Education was first instituted on the University campus in a temporary building, it consisted only of the College of Education and an elementary practice school, all under Colonel Parker. When it moved into its permanent building five years ago, under the directorship of Dr. John Dewey, there was added the University Elementary School which had been for some years widely known as the laboratory school for the Department of Education, developed under Dr. Dewey's management. At the same time two secondary schools were merged under the same organization and were moved under the same roof, the Chicago High and Manual-Training School, with its organizer and head, Dr. H. H. Belfield, and the South Side Academy, under Mr. William B. Owen. While this gave to the School of Education the advantage of large and well-established secondary schools as practice and experiment ground for prospective teachers in high schools, it complicated vastly the questions of organization and course of study.

The opportunity is here presented of shaping an elastic and continuous plan that shall express and answer the social needs of children throughout the nine school years.

The continuity of the educational process is a perfectly valid theory, but it has never been realized. We therefore say advisedly, the opportunity "*is* presented," for although these divisions of the school are and have been operating on a very carefully thought out course of study, and one that has been tested in experience, yet we believe that the course of study will always be in the process of shaping itself. The school no longer stands alone. Nor does it lag so far behind its age as formerly. It rests on a society which is itself not fixed but evolving. The school, one great expression of society's needs, is not to be fixed. If the school utilizes social experience, assimilating its knowledges, its forms of control, its processes, and its ideals, then it must necessarily be progressive in its *mode* of utilizing this experience and in turning it back to the social whole that has thus surrounded, fed, and inspired it. The ideal of the relative functions of school and society may not change, but the mode and materials of utilization must alter as society moves. As science discovers, religion changes its emphasis, industry alters its methods of production, and the forms of social organization are modified, the school will change its focus and particulars of content. Moreover, as the light of research in psychology and child-study are turned upon the course of study, it must be that we shall test the validity of our procedure by increasingly definite standards of the normal and best in content and control throughout the successive stages of school life. It is this unfolding perspective that gives to teaching the allurements of the unattained and the enticements of the undiscovered country.

This then is the great opportunity of a school which has as its "advisory council" those who are working in psychological and philosophical research, and as its laboratory a school in which experiment is not forbidden, but whose faculty are, on the contrary committed to the policy of carrying out and testing modern educational theory.

This does not mean that this school stands apart and isolated from the public-school problems, but rather that it exists for the sake of public education, being under conditions that permit freedom in experiment. Whatever is of worth in ideal or procedure is being sought, not for one small set of children in Chicago, but for its worth to the school at large. Unless results of value can be turned over to the public schools this particular school will have failed utterly to realize the aim of its founders. It is for this reason that the *Elementary School Teacher* exists, first, as a bulletin, or "report of progress," for all who may be interested in such reports, and, second, as a medium through which news of any similarly experimental or independent work may be circulated.

The question of the relation of school work to the industrial life of home and of society has not merely brought another element into the course of study; it has been the determining factor in shaping it. The two conceptions that have been effective in this reconstruction are the genetic ideal, and the belief in the relation of school and society. We might add a third factor, which has been in the past the *raison d'être* of school, its ruling principle for generations; namely, the idea that the school's function is to put the child in possession of the formal tools of thought and communication, the instruments of knowledge.

The genetic ideal is a guide to obtaining continuity, the social ideal gives grip, vitality, motive power, and casts the form of much of the work, while the need of control makes the demand for a smooth working process—a demand which ideally comes from the child's own appreciation of the advantage of more ready adjustments. Thus drill follows the perception of meaning, drill comes after not before the seeing, grasp, and solution of the problem, drill arises as a felt need on the child's part, not wholly as an enforced discipline. The studio, the garden, the shops for metal and woodworking, modeling, pottery, and textile work, all are significant as outward and visible signs of this belief in the meaning of productive work.

What is the relation of this productive effort to the ends of knowledge and discipline? It is a relation so close as to be scarcely analyzable into "subject" and "demonstration." Just as the shuttle flies back and forth from side to side of the web, so knowledge, the aim, passes over into effort, achievement, or adjustment, and returns bringing control; knowledge made definite, workable, the aim renewed, cleared, strengthened, passes back into further effort, and again the reaction. Purpose, motive, persistence, criticism, and reflection are all parts of the total activity. The pageantry of life moves on. The school does not shut its doors upon it, nor does it open them to let the children plunge into the bewildering throng. Yet this pageant of life, the moving, changing, producing life of humanity and the life that we call "nature" is the absorbing process to which we all respond in what we are pleased to term impulse, interest, or curiosity, what you will. The response is, in the little child, overt, concrete activity in the shape of imitation and play. He becomes participant of human activity through play. Experience becomes *his* experience in play modes.. His knowledge and understanding grow through this kind of response. The shops therefore scarcely exist for him as places of real production. He needs not so much great technical knowledge and skill in his teacher, as readiness and resourcefulness in helping him to clear his vague ideas and hold his fleeting images in expressive acts of drawing, building, modeling and dramatizing.

The child who, a little older, is laying out his little farm, is probably playing still, but with more persistent purpose and detailed imagery. The children of a still older grade are interested both in realizing work that will stand the test of real use, and in working out the steps or processes by which a people or race has achieved a result of common and universal meaning, such as the steps involved in preparing a textile fabric.

The older children bring greater critical power. More co-operative ability to the work. The trips and excursions reveal to them the conditions under which people work, the complicated modern tools of production, and something of the stupendous scale on which production and exchange are carried on. The larger social significances are beginning to come into consciousness.

In the intermediate and older grades technical control is a necessity in the teacher. In the groups just beyond the kindergarten skill and knowledge are as essential, and yet experience has taught us that the danger of disintegrating the child's mental control is great where his school time is distributed between many teachers though each be a specialist in her own line. A plan of simplifying the variety of arts and reducing the number of teachers has been set in operation here as an experiment for the past year.

In the secondary school more thorough differentiation begins. This seems to be the place where special interests are stronger and individual preferences are assertive, and the place where, if ever, choice may be made between one handicraft or another. Somewhere in these years the test of *actual* participation in commercially valued industry might begin. The break has been pointed out between the production of work in which children are satisfied to meet the tests of value found in their own appreciation or criticism, or in that of companions, of family, or of those in their immediate social group, and that production which must meet the test of a larger public, in other words, the commercial test. Is the high school the field for bringing the learner into a positive working relation with the life in which he has previously been spectator, playful participant, and *semi* real participant?

So far, no statement has been made of the theoretic or practical relationships maintained between science and the industrial arts, nor can any but the briefest statement be made in the limits of this article. In a word, science illuminates the process, and shows the nature and treatment of the materials of production. Science gives also the method of experiment used not only in the field of nature-study, but in that of invention. Reciprocally the arts give focus and definiteness to scientific inquiry—or, to put it more simply, to investigation.

The practical, artistic, and industrial aspects of the school afford a genuine ground of social intercourse. Further than this the games and sports, clubs, general assemblies and festivals stand for the social side of school life.

The heads of departments are in charge of their subjects in the Elementary and High Schools. This is theoretically true and practically carried out in the Elementary School, and is being worked out in the High School. The curriculum of the Elementary School is shaped and revised for each ensuing year through a series of conferences between the departmental teachers, the grade teachers, and the principal. The teacher of the grade is the one who is finally responsible for the work of her group, and she, with the departmental teachers who are working with her children for any given quarter, try to hold the work in an organic relation by planning together wherever such relation seems essential.

No briefest sketch of the school would be complete without at least a mention of the Parents' Association, which, keeping watch and ward over it has been in a collective and personal sense the guide, mentor, and friend of all its activities.